

College Athlete NIL Litigation, Case No. 4:20-cv-03919

To the Honorable Claudia Wilken,

My name is Samantha Chan, and I am a student-athlete. I started swimming competitively at the age of six. I wasn't a natural talent, but I fell in love with the sport and kept showing up, day after day, year after year. I spent countless mornings before sunrise in a cold pool. It took years of sacrifice, grit, and relentless hard work, but it eventually paid off. At thirteen, I qualified for nationals. That was just the beginning.

Since then, I have become a three-time USA Swimming Scholastic All-America, a five-time high school state champion, and a junior national medalist. I also poured myself into academics, ultimately being named a U.S. Presidential Scholar, an honor only 161 students receive each year in the entire country.

I share this not to boast, but to show you just how much I've devoted my life to chasing a dream. My dream wasn't just to swim. I wanted to represent my school at the NCAA Championships. I wanted to compete with the best. I believed in the promise of college athletics: that if you worked hard enough, you could earn your place.

That promise was broken on March 31st. I was called into a meeting with my head coach and a university administrator I had never met. Without warning, I was told I was preemptively cut from the team due to roster limits and revenue sharing. There was no other explanation for this decision, no warning, just the cold reality that I would not be swimming next season. I hadn't known that my conference meet was my last meet. I was devastated. I still am.

Had I known this could happen, I would've made a different choice for my education, my future, and my life. But I committed in good faith. I committed because I believed my place on the team was a four-year opportunity, not a one-year placeholder.

Now I'm left with no team, no NCAA career, and no real path forward. While the transfer portal is an option for some, I can't afford to transfer. I chose my school because of its academic excellence, and financially, it would be nearly impossible to find a comparable scholarship elsewhere. I've worked too hard for this to be how it ends.

And the cruelest part? I wasn't cut because I wasn't good enough. I was cut because the athletic department needed to make room for a new financial model brought about by the *House v. NCAA* settlement. My dream was sacrificed for numbers on a spreadsheet.

Judge Wilken, I did not object earlier because I was afraid; afraid that speaking up might cost me my place on the team. But today, I am asking you from the bottom of my heart: please do not approve the *House v. NCAA* settlement without including a grandfather provision. Please don't let the burden of a system-wide change fall on the shoulders of the current student-athletes who were promised something different. We came to these schools believing we had a future. That belief was earned through years of resilience and trust. To lose everything in an instant is not just unfair. It's heartbreaking.

You still have the power to protect thousands of student-athletes from being collateral damage. Please give us the chance to finish what we started. Please give us back the opportunity we were promised.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your compassion.

With deep respect and hope,

Samantha Chan

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